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The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-ninth year

Note verbale dated 22 June 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council, and has the honour to transmit herewith a reply to the Israeli allegations contained in document A/58/837-S/2004/465 dated 8 June 2004 (see annex).

It would be appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 37, 84 and 156, and of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 22 June 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Identical letters dated 22 June 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I wish to clarify the following, in response to the Israeli claims made in document A/58/837-S/2004/465 dated 8 June 2004, which constitutes in its entirety a falsification and a distortion of the facts, and levels baseless accusations against my country in a pathetic attempt by Israel to deceive the international community as usual and justify its terrorism and aggression against the Lebanese people and its occupation of Arab lands.

While Israeli officials continue to make empty claims before the international community relating to Israel's supposed desire for peace, its continued occupation of Arab lands and the arbitrary measures taken by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, the occupied Syrian Golan, and against Lebanon, manifestly contradict the statements of these officials.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue its aggressive course that has been condemned hundreds of times from the standpoint of international legitimacy. It continues to escalate the situation in the Middle East and push the security situation there to the brink of collapse by committing increasing massacres and assassinations in Palestinian territory, making serious threats against the Syrian Arab Republic, and engaging in a series of persistent, almost daily provocative violations of Lebanese sovereignty by land, air and sea, in contravention of the principles of international law and relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

It is not unknown to the international community that Israel has excused itself from implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and has continued its occupation of Syrian and Palestinian lands from 1967 until now, and parts of Lebanese territory since 1982. It is also not unknown that peoples under foreign occupation do not need anyone to remind them of the reality of occupation and its oppression, and not to accept, and, indeed, to resist it.

The serious escalation carried out by Israel in southern Lebanon is intended merely to divert the attention of the international community from its crimes, consisting of the construction of the expansionist separation wall in the West Bank, the policy of assassinations, the destruction of homes, and the incursions it makes into Palestinian territory, not to mention its unilateral schemes circumventing relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

It is important to point out that Israel's record as it relates to respecting international legitimacy and implementing its resolutions is not in any way an honourable one. Israel has been in defiance of the United Nations and its resolutions from 1948 until now. General Assembly resolution 181 (II) concerning the Palestinian State has remained on paper since that time. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) concerning the right of return for Palestinian refugees has met with nothing but defiance and denial from Israel. Security Council resolutions 242

(1967) and 338 (1973) seeking the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East are opposed by Israel and encounter all kinds of distortion and infringement. Similarly, the hand of peace outstretched by the Arabs in the Beirut summit of 2002 has been greeted by Israel with the perpetration of the Jenin and Nablus massacres, a series of provocative assassinations of Palestinian leaders, the destruction of thousands of Palestinian civilian homes, and the making of threats against the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon.

Thus, all nations of the world can speak of international legitimacy and of implementing Security Council and General Assembly resolutions except Israel, which has become the symbol of departure from international legitimacy and defiance of its resolutions.

Anyone who follows the Middle East question and the peace process knows that the only way to end the cycle of violence is through returning to international legitimacy and a commitment to the implementation of the resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands to the line of 4 June 1967, guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people including their right of return to their homeland in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (II), withdrawal from the occupied portions of southern Lebanon, and returning to the principles of the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 with the goal of bringing about a comprehensive and lasting peace guaranteeing security and stability for all peoples of the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to affirm once again its commitment to the principles of a just and comprehensive peace as envisaged in the Madrid and Arab peace initiatives endorsed by the Beirut summit of 2002, and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. It has also opposed and continues to oppose terrorism and State terrorism in word and deed, inasmuch as it has actively participated in international cooperation to fight it.

The Syrian Arab Republic believes that the interests of its people dictate calming the situation not only in southern Lebanon but in the entire Middle East, but feels that the facts and evidence show that its efforts towards this objective continue to clash with the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the policy followed by Israel of escalation, defiance and imposition of faits accomplis.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of this letter as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 37, 84 and 156, and of the Security Council.